

INFORMATION REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL

COUNTRY Korea

SUBJECT Tantalum Mine at Tannok

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182*

1. During World War II, the Japanese exploited the heavy sand at the Tannok[®] mine, approximately seven miles south of Kumbwa (127-29, 38-18). In [REDACTED] Soviet specialists inspected the mine and found tantalum** there. The mineral was described as blue in color, extremely hard, and resistant to hammer blows. The Soviets stated that it was a necessary ingredient for an undescribed "special weapon."

2. [REDACTED] Soviet civilian specialists made frequent visits to the site. The mine was divided into north and south districts early in 1949, and many large caves were dug. Work was placed on a 24-hour schedule, and a yearly quota of two tons of tantalum was set. There was no yield of tantalum in the first six months [REDACTED] but in July, there was a production of four tons, which greatly pleased the Soviets. The material was placed in clean cotton sacks and packed in wooden boxes; then was removed from the mine in trucks and shipped from Kumbwa River station by train to the USSR.

3. The Tannok Mine was a national enterprise of the North Korean government. During October and [REDACTED] workers from other trades were conscripted to work at the mine, and special bonuses were offered employees who overproduced their quotas. North Korean superintendents at the mine, however, were not enthusiastic.

** [REDACTED] Comment: This mineral was called "thantarium" in the original report.

CLASSIFICATION ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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This document is hereby regraded to CONFIDENTIAL in accordance with the letter of 10 October 1978 from the Director of Central Intelligence to the Archivist of the United States.

Next Review Date: 2008

Approved For Release 2001/12/04 : CIA-RDP82-00457R007000170001-9

Document No.	01
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Declassified	
Class. Changed To: TS S	
Auth.: [REDACTED]	By: 029
Date: 02/28	